

# THE SHRINE of WISDOM

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## EDITORIAL

### SUSPENSION OF THE PUBLICATION OF "THE SHRINE OF WISDOM"

The Editors have decided to discontinue the publication of this Magazine for an indefinite period. The Summer Number (112), which completes the 28th yearly volume of *The Shrine of Wisdom*, will be the last to be published for the present.

It is intended to concentrate upon the reprinting and publishing of *The Shrine of Wisdom* Manuals. During the past few years several of these have gone out of print, the stocks of several others are now almost exhausted, and new Manuals await publication.

The Manuals have two chief advantages which the periodical lacks: they are self-contained, and are bound in a permanent form. Moreover, since the demand for Manuals is several times greater than that for the Magazine, it is evident that they should receive preferential attention.

The price of the publications has always been made as low as possible in order to make them available to all. This practice will be continued, but owing to the very great advance in the cost of printing the price of new publications will have to be correspondingly increased.

Any balance of unexpired subscriptions to the Magazine will be returned or, if subscribers will inform the Secretary of their wish, may be deducted from the price of any Manuals ordered.

Whenever new Manuals and new editions of old ones are published, notification will be sent to present subscribers.

A catalogue of Manuals now available is enclosed. The prices will be subject to revision as new editions are published.

The Editors wish to thank subscribers for their support. They will be pleased to hear from any of their readers who may wish to communicate with them.

## THE PURPOSE OF MAN

From the Perfect Sermon of Hermes Trismegistus

I see, O Asclepius, that thou art desirous of knowing in what manner man can have a love and worship of Heaven and of the things that are therein; learn then, O Asclepius!

The love of God and Heaven and the Divinities who are therein, is one perpetual act of worship.

No other being or animal, except man, is able to do this. This reverence, adoration, praise, and the acts of worship of men, are the delight of Heaven and the Celestial Hosts.

The choir of the Muses has been sent by Deity unto men in order that the terrestrial world might not be uncultured or lacking in the charm of melody, or rather that men might adore with hymns and praise Him Who alone is the All, or the Father of All, that the dulcet harmonies of earth might thus unite with the harmonies of the Celestials.

Some, though only a very few men, enlightened with pure Intelligence, have become gifted for the sacred charge of contemplating Heaven clearly.

Those in whom the confusion of their two natures still holds the intelligence captive to the body, are adapted to be attendants of the elements and things of the lower world.

Man is not, however, debased because he has an animal and mortal nature, but rather he is all the more fit and efficient to fulfil his two pre-ordained functions, which fulfilment is possible only through his two-fold nature.

Thus man is constituted in such a manner that he possesses the powers of both cultivating earthly things and of loving the Divine.

The reason of such a thesis as this, O Asclepius, I desire that thou shouldst grasp with the full attention and power of thy mind; for it is a reason that many men are unable to believe. The Perfect and True are to be comprehended only by the more holy minds.

Thus I begin: first is God, the Lord of Eternity; second is the Cosmos; third is Man.

God is the Creator of the Cosmos and all that it contains. He also rules all, and has made Man with Himself to be the ruler of compound things; the whole of which Man, taking on himself, makes the object of his special love and care, in order that the two of them, himself and the Cosmos, may each be an ornament to the other, so that the world may truly be named "Cosmos".

Man knows himself and also knows the Cosmos. He therefore recognizes those things that accord with his own nature. He recollects the things that he must use, that they may be of service. While giving the greatest praise and thanks to God, he also reveres the Cosmos, the first image of God, remembering that he is himself the second image of God.

For there are two images of God; the Cosmos is one, and man is another, for he, even as the Cosmos, is a single whole, consisting of diverse parts. So it is evident that man has a compound nature, and in order that he may be fully equipped in both his parts, he has been fashioned so that each should consist of four elements; and so in respect of the divine part of him which is composed of other and higher elements, as it were, namely: soul and consciousness, spirit and reason, he has the power to mount by the higher elements into Heaven. But in his Cosmic part, composed of fire, water, earth and air, he is mortal, and remains on earth lest he should forsake the things committed to his care. Thus mankind is composed of an immortal and a mortal nature.

Now the two-fold nature of man, working as a unity, is regulated chiefly by piety, the result of which is goodness.

Perfection is attained only when virtue preserves man from desiring that which is alien to his true self.

Terrestrial things of which the body desires possession, are alien from kinship with the Gods, for these are not born with us, but are later acquired.

All such things are alien to the real man—even his body. Therefore he may lightly esteem, not only the object of desire, but also that whereby base desires are derived.

In the degree that reason leads his soul, so will he be truly man, and so by contemplating the Divine, will take but small account of that mortal part that has been joined to him for the care of the lower world.

For, indeed, in order that man should be complete in either

part, observe that each of these has been composed of four binary divisions—the two hands and the two feet, and the other members of his body, by means of which he may do service to the lower terrestrial world.

And, on the other side, there are added the four powers of sensibility and mind, memory and foresight, by means of which he may perceive and reverence all things Divine.

Hence it is that man investigates the differences and qualities, the effects and quantities of things with critical judgement. But if he is greatly held back by the heavy weight of the body's limitations, he is unable properly to penetrate into the true causes and reasons of things.

Seeing that man has thus been formed and fashioned, and has been appointed by the Supreme God to such tasks of service and worship, what think you should be his reward, if by a well-ordered life of labour in the world committed to his charge, and by honouring God with pious observances, in both respects alike he worthily and fittingly obeys God's will?

For since the Cosmos is God's handiwork, he who preserves and augments its beauty by his love, joins his own work to God's in accordance with the Divine will, when he with toil and care, and the help of his own body, strives to do his part in the cultivation of the natural forms which God has made. With what reward should he be recompensed, unless it be that with which our forefathers have been blessed?

May it please Divine Goodness to accord this recompense also to you; such is our prayer for you who are devoted to this holy work.

May He, when your term of service is ended, and you have put off the restrictions of the world, and freed yourselves from the bonds of mortality, restore you pure and holy to your higher self—that is to the Divine.

## CHINESE AND JAPANESE TRIADS

Whenever and wherever man has considered deeply the profound mysteries of life and its Divine Cause, there has been a more or less definitely formulated teaching regarding the Divine Trinity and the manifold triadic cosmic and human principles.

The number of Triads introduced into the Chinese and Japanese systems, as in most others, is so extensive that only a few of them can be mentioned in this article.

In ancient China legend invariably precedes history, and it is in this legendary aspect that the triad first appears as trigrams on the mythical dragon-horse, *Lin*, or Unicorn, which emerges from the River Ho, bearing these mysterious figures upon its back. It is from these that the Emperor Fo-hi\* is recorded as having derived his idea of the eight diagrams, which form the basis of the *Yi-King* or Book of Changes, one of the most highly venerated and mysterious of the Chinese Classics, in which the triadic interaction of the Yang and Yin are elaborated with amazing variety and ingenious complexity.

Always closely associated with the dragon-horse is the mythical Tortoise or *Kwei*, which crept forth from the River Lo, and upon its back, interwoven with the pattern of its shell, were the symbols of the numerals from one to nine—the triple triad, which is the basis of all subsequent numeration.

From these two legendary occurrences the Chinese derive the inception of written characters, though it is traditionally reported that the unfoldment in the method of recording events passed through the stages of tying knots in cords, and of cutting notches on the edges of bamboo sticks, before it arrived at the written character, which at first was pictorial and crudely representative.

With the passage of time the pictorial figures became more and more conventionalized and symbolic, until the representative element is now only with difficulty recognized.

The Chinese written character is itself triadic, for there are three main styles of writing which are generally recognized, namely: the *Chan* or *Kai* or true style, the *Hsing* or proceeding

\* See *Shrine of Wisdom*, No. 60, pp. 321-330.

style, and the *Ts'ao* or grass style. These have been designated: standing, walking, and running respectively, which terms give a graphic suggestion of the chief characteristics of each.

(1) The *Chan* or true style is static and abiding. It is basic and fundamental and that from which the subsequent styles are derived. It is also sometimes called the square style. Its initial elements were fixed in the Han Dynasty (208 B.C.—A.D. 25) and they have remained practically unchanged to the present day. The Chinese character *Chan* means: true, real, unadulterated, authoritative (as a classic), spiritual, pure, actual and not secondary. Thus it will be seen to designate truly and justly this model or pattern style of Chinese calligraphy.

(2) The *Hsing* or proceeding style is dynamic and progressive. It moves or flows, and it may be as the galloping horse, or as eddying water, according to the mood of him who wields the brush. This style has been termed modified, and also semi-cursive. The Chinese character *Hsing* is composed of subsidiary characters, meaning a step with the left foot joined with a step with the right foot, and it means—to step, to go, to walk, to act, to do, to direct. Thus it fitly gives its name to this forceful style, which is, as it were, a bridge between the preceding style and what follows it.

(3) The *Ts'ao* or grass or cursive style is ideal and returning. It is a still more drastic modification of the *Chan* style. It is poetically said to have “the swing and turn of dancing sleeves”, or to depict “the twining branches of hanging wisteria”. It is essentially the free and beautiful style of the painter and poet, and examples of it by masters of calligraphy are greatly prized in China. It is the limit to which freedom of style may flow, and yet retains legibility and intelligibility; but as the end of the outward journey is the beginning of the journey back again, it will be obvious in what way this style may be considered as “returning”. The Chinese character *Ts'ao* means literally grass and vegetation generally, but it has also a subsidiary meaning of “hastily”, for this style lends itself to rapidity. Let it not be thought, however, that it is to be easily acquired, for only genius can blend skill and speed with an exquisite result, and produce an art which conceals art. The character *Ts'ao* is almost as closely associated with this style of writing as it is with the more general meaning of “vegetation”.

In Japan, these three characters: *Chan*, *Hsing*, and *Ts'ao*, are pronounced *Shin*, *Gyo*, and *So*, for the Japanese employ Chinese characters, retaining their meaning, but use different sounds to designate them. They likewise recognize and practise the three styles of writing Chinese characters.

One of the greatest Japanese makers of "colour prints", the artist Hokusai (A.D. 1760-1849), produced a little book entitled, *The Three Form Picture Book*. It consists of a series of pictures, three of each, drawn respectively in the manner of *Shin*, *Gyo*, and *So*, and to distinguish each, a symbol is used by the side of the corresponding picture: a square beside the pictures in the *Shin*, true or square style; two triangles touching at their points as in an hour glass by the pictures in the *Gyo*, proceeding, or semi-cursive style; and a circle by the pictures in the *So*, grass or cursive style.

While there is a correspondence between the square and circle and the abiding and returning principles, when considered from the objective and mundane standpoint; in the primary, subjective, or spiritual aspect the correspondence is in the reverse order to that given. This applies also to some of the other correspondences mentioned.

The publishers introduce the work with a preface which has probably not previously been translated. It is as follows\*:

"There are three forms of writing: *Shin*, *Gyo*, and *So*. With pictures there are also three forms.

"The flower which has just bloomed is in the form of *Shin*; when it has begun to fall it is in the form of *Gyo*; when the petals are swept over the ground by the wind, then it is in the form of *So*.

"When the moon is at its fullest it is *Shin*; when it is as a bow it is *Gyo*; but when the moon is seen in the morning twilight towards the end of the month, then it is *So*.

"When the snow is falling in drifts it is *Shin*; when the snow covers the world it is *Gyo*; when it is melting it is *So*.

"Someone for mischief sealed the gate of Hokusai with a giant snowball, so not being able to go out he stayed in his studio and made this picture book. Then as the blossoming of the plum tree in the early Spring, when the seal of Winter is broken, this book was published and became famous in twelve streets.

\* Translated by the Editors of *The Shrine of Wisdom*.

"There is said to be as great a variety of the pictures of Hokusai as it is possible to make images in snow.

"With his versatile brush he painted this series and named it *The Three Form Picture Book*."

As a text-book for the better understanding of the three styles this little volume is invaluable. Its beauty is joy engendering, and it is enlivened by a quaint sense of humour, and dignified by an unquestionable sincerity.

When Hokusai came to the end of his long and busy life at the age of eighty-nine with much distinguished work to his credit, his only regret was that he could not live a little longer, as he was, in his own opinion, only beginning to learn to draw.

His simple funeral was attended by many noble patrons, and he was given the posthumous Buddhist name of *Shinshi*, meaning "Man of Sincerity".

A further manifestation of the Triad is to be found in the Chinese *Three-Character-Classic*. In the ancient Chinese educational system, which lasted for many centuries up to the introduction of Western methods with the advent of the Chinese Republic, children from the age of about seven years began their school life by learning to recite extracts from this book, a few at a time until they knew it all.

The *Three-Character-Classic* consists of 356 alternatively rhyming lines of three characters each. Its subject-matter is varied, consisting of moral precepts, lists of classics, an outline of history, and an admonition to study.

It is well known that the threefold form, when founded upon the three fundamental Divine principles, assists the memory. The ancient Chinese built their educational system on a sound basis, and the young minds, unfolding in the light of the moral precepts contained in this simple but profound classic, could not fail to profit by its assimilation.

Professor Herbert A. Giles has made an excellent translation of the whole book,\* and the following extract will serve as an example:—

*Jen chih chu*

Men arrive beginning

Men at their birth

\* *San Tzu Ching (Three-Character-Classic)* by Herbert A. Giles, Shanghai: Kelly & Walsh, Ltd. 1900.

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<i>Hsing pen shan</i> Nature root good	are naturally good.
<i>Hsing hsiang chin</i> Nature mutual near	Their natures are much the same;
<i>Hsi hsiang yuan</i> Practice mutual far	their habits become widely different.
<i>Kou pu chiao</i> Wrongly not teach	If foolishly there is no teaching,
<i>Hsing nai ch'ien</i> Nature then teach	the nature will deteriorate.
<i>Chiao chih tao</i> Teach arrive road	The right way of teaching,
<i>Kuei i chuan</i> Valuable take single	is to attach the utmost importance to thoroughness.

In China there are three great religions: Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism, and these function not as rivals but as complementary aspects of truth. All three religions have official recognition, and it is quite usual for devotees to go from the temple of one religion to that of another, even in the same day, if they are moved to do so, without any charge of inconsistency being brought against them.

One of the basic Chinese Triads is that of Heaven, Earth and Man. They are named "The Three Powers" and are to be found in many aspects of Chinese symbolism.

An interesting human Chinese Triad is "The Three Mental Qualifications of a Student": Power of Application, Memory and Understanding.

These examples, selected from many, will serve to show the importance of the Triad to the Chinese Mind, and perhaps encourage the reader to look for other examples in both Oriental and Occidental thought.

## PLOTINUS "ON THE DESCENT OF THE SOUL"\*\*

*Therefore it is necessary that there should not be THE ONE alone, for if this were the case all things would be concealed in His ineffable nature, and would no longer possess any proper and distinguishing form, being swallowed up, as it were, in His solitary Deity; nor would there be any multitude of beings generated from One First Cause, unless among the number of things which receive a progression from thence some were found established in the order of souls.*

*In like manner it is requisite that there should not only be souls, but that their effects also should have a perspicuous subsistence (since every nature possesses an essential ability of producing something posterior to itself, and of unfolding it into light from its occult subsistence in dormant power), and this as if from a certain indivisible principle and seed proceeding to a sensible extremity, while that which has a priority of subsistence always abides in its proper seat, but that which is consequent is generated from an ineffable power, such as belongs to superior beings, and is the proper characteristic of their natures.*

But barrenness is perfectly remote from such a power; for if it were barren, its prolific energies must be restrained through envy, which, on the contrary, ought always to be exerted in the most liberal progression, till all things have proceeded as much as possible to their ultimate extremity: for it is proper that a cause of inexhaustible power should diffuse its beneficence through all things, and not endure to behold anything deprived of the unenvying exuberance of its nature; for there is nothing which can prevent any being from receiving the communications of good, as far as the capacity of its nature will permit. If, therefore, the nature of matter were eternal, it would be impossible, since it always subsisted, that it should not participate of that cause which abundantly supplies every thing with all the good it is capable of receiving. If, on the other hand, the generation of matter necessarily follows causes prior to its nature, neither in this case is it proper that matter,

\* For previous section see *Shrine of Wisdom*, No. 106.

through its imbecility, should be deprived of the benefits prior to its nature; as if a perfectly beneficent cause withheld the liberal communication of good.

That which is most beautiful, therefore, in the sensible world, is a representation of that which is best in intelligibles, namely, the power and goodness essential to their natures. Indeed, all things, both intelligibles and sensibles, are connected in the most becoming order; the former of these subsisting by themselves, and the latter perpetually receiving being from the participation of intelligibles, which they endeavour to imitate as far as their flowing and unreal natures will permit.

But since natures are two-fold, one kind intelligible and the other sensible, it is better indeed for the soul to abide in the intelligible world, but necessary from its condition that it should participate of a sensible nature: nor ought it to suffer any molestation from a consciousness that it is not the best of beings, since it obtains a middle order in the universality of things, and possesses indeed a Divine condition, but is placed in the last gradation of an intelligible essence, bordering, as it were, on the regions of sense. Hence it confers something of itself on a sensible nature, from which likewise it receives something in return, unless, preserving its own proper integrity, it rules over the defiling nature of sense; since through an abundance of sensible desire it becomes profoundly merged in matter, and no longer totally abides with universal soul.

Yet our souls are able to rise from hence, carrying back with them the experience of what they have known and suffered in their fallen state; from whence they will learn how blessed it is to abide in the intelligible world, and, by a comparison, as it were, of contraries, will more plainly perceive the excellence of a superior state. For the experience of evil produces a clearer knowledge of good, especially where the power of judgment is so imbecile that it cannot without such experience obtain the science of that which is best. As, therefore, an intellectual discursive energy is a certain descent to that which is last, and of a worse condition, for it is not lawful that such an energy should proceed to a superior nature, hence it is necessary that energizing from itself, without being able to abide in itself, it should proceed by an unavoidable law of nature as far as to soul: for this is its proper bound; and that which is consequent to soul

becomes also a limit to the progressive energies of soul. It is, therefore, natural to soul to deliver itself to inferior and again return to superior beings; and to govern corporeal natures posterior to itself and contemplate the prior and more exalted essences of the intelligible world. And all this is accomplished in our souls according to the circulations of time, in which a conversion takes place from subordinate to more exalted natures. But to the soul of the world it is doubtless proper that it should never be occupied in an inferior employment, and that without becoming passive to evil it should behold subsequent natures with the eye of Divine contemplation, and at the same time always depend, as it were, from beings prior to itself: and this twofold employment it is able to accomplish at once, receiving from higher beings, and supplying such as are inferior; for it is impossible, from its nature as soul, that it should not touch on both these opposite extremes.

Indeed, if it is proper to speak clearly what appears to me to be the truth, contrary to the opinions of others, *the whole of our soul also does not enter into body, but something belonging to it always abides in the intelligible, and something different from this in the sensible world:* and that which abides in the sensible world, if it conquers, or rather if it is vanquished and disturbed, does not permit us to perceive that which the supreme part of the soul contemplates; for that which is understood then arrives at our nature, when it descends within the limits of sensible inspection. For we do not know everything which takes place about any particular part of the soul till it arrives at the whole of the soul; just as desire, abiding in the desiderative part of the soul, is then at length known by us when either by a certain intimate sensitive or cogitative power, or from the conjunction of both, we recognize its existence. For every soul possesses something which inclines downwards to body, and something which tends upwards towards intellect.

But the soul, indeed, which is universal and of the universe, by its part which is inclined towards body, governs the whole without labour and fatigue, transcending that which it governs; because its operations do not subsist, like ours, through the discursive energies of reason, but through intellect alone, in the same manner as art operates without deliberation and inquiry. Hence by her ultimate part she supervenes and adorns the

whole. Souls which are particular and of a part, have also something supereminent; but they are too much occupied by sense, and by a perception of many things happening contrary to nature, and on every side producing anxiety and grief: and this because the object of their attention and care is partial, indigent and deficient, and surrounded with a multitude of foreign concerns. It is likewise subject to a variety of affections, and is ensnared by the allurements of pleasure; but the superior part of the soul is never influenced by fraudulent delights, and lives a life always uniform and divine.

### SEED THOUGHT

Now the Soul is a bridge, a boundary, so that these worlds may not be confused. Day and night do not pass over that bridge, nor old age, death and grief: neither good nor evil deeds. All evil-doers turn back from it, for the world of Brahma is free from all evil.

Therefore he who has crossed that bridge, if blind, ceases to be blind, if wounded, ceases to be wounded; if afflicted, ceases to be afflicted. Therefore when that bridge has been crossed, night becomes day, for the world of Brahma is illuminated for ever.

And that world of Brahma is found by those only who practise sacred wisdom—for they possess freedom in all the worlds.

That which people call sacrifice is really sacred wisdom, for he who knows, enters the world of Brahma.

From the *Chandogya Upanishad*

## THE BRAHMIN

From the *Dhammapada*

This article shows Buddha's teachings regarding the spiritual qualities and virtues of the true sage, saint, and perfected one.

It is noticeable that although the negative aspects of these qualities and virtues and the defects of inordinate human nature are indicated in strong contrast, there is an absence of any condemnation of the foolish, the sinner, and the debased. Indeed the means whereby the latter may be converted into the former are the very cultivation of the qualities and virtues shown forth in such an unmistakable manner.

Stop the stream of thy cravings with steadfast effort, O Brahmin! when thou understandest the dissolution of all component things, thou wilt realize Nirvana.

When the Brahmin has reached the conditions of tranquillity and insight, all fetters fall away, for he knows the real.

He for whom there is neither without or within; who is fearless and unshackled: him I indeed call a Brahmin.

He who practises meditation, who is free from stain, dutiful, without passions, who has reached the highest goal: him I indeed call a Brahmin.

The sun is bright by day, the moon shines by night; the warrior shines in his armour, the Brahmin shines in meditation. But Buddha shines with brilliant splendour by day and by night.

A man who has banished evil is a true Brahmin. He who disciplines his conduct is called a Disciple. He who gives evil no place in his heart is called a Pilgrim.

No one should hurt a Brahmin, but if hurt let not the Brahmin retaliate. Shame on him who strikes a Brahmin, but more shame on the Brahmin who retaliates.

Great benefit is acquired by the Brahmin who restrains his mind and inclinations. He who suppresses ill-will soon comes to the end of suffering.

Him I call indeed a Brahmin who does not offend by deed or word or thought.

Him from whom a man learns the Law of the Enlightened

One let him respect, even as the Brahmin reveres the sacrificial fire.

A man does not become a Brahmin by wearing plaited hair, nor by birth. He in whom there is truth and righteousness, he is blessed, he is a Brahmin.

What is the use of plaited hair, O foolish man? Of what use thy garment of skins? Within thee there is filth, but the outside thou makest clean.

He who takes no thought of clothes, who meditates alone in the forest, him I call a Brahmin.

I do not call a man a Brahmin merely because of his birth in the Brahmin caste or because he is wealthy, but he who is free from attachment to all possessions, him I call a Brahmin.

Him I call a Brahmin who has severed all fetters, who has overcome fear and is free from all bondage.

Him I call a Brahmin who has cut the strap, the thong, and the rope, who has overcome all obstacles and is awokened.

Him I call a Brahmin who, without resentment, endures abuse, blows, and bonds, and has patience for his support.

Him I call a Brahmin who is free from anger, dutiful, virtuous, free from desire, self-controlled, who is in his last body.

Him I call a Brahmin who does not cling to sensuous pleasures, from whom they drop like water from a lotus leaf, like a mustard seed from the point of a needle.

Him I call a Brahmin who, even here, knows the end of his suffering, who has put down his burden, and is unshackled.

Him I call a Brahmin who is wise, who knows the right way and the wrong, and has attained the highest end.

Him I call a Brahmin who has but few wants, and is neither a householder nor a beggar.

Him I call a Brahmin who refrains from hurting any creature, does not slay or cause others to slay.

Him I call a Brahmin who is tolerant with the intolerant, mild with the violent, and free from greed among the greedy.

Him I call a Brahmin from whom desire and anger, pride and envy have fallen like a mustard seed from the point of a needle.

Him I call a Brahmin whose speech is kindly, instructive, and true, who offendeth none.

Him I call a Brahmin who takes nothing that is not given to him, be it large or small, beautiful or ugly.

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Him I call a Brahmin who is free from desires for this world or for another.

Him I call a Brahmin in whom is no desire, who has ceased to doubt, and has gained knowledge of Nirvana.

Him I call a Brahmin who has risen above ties, both good and evil, who is free from sorrow, sin, and impurity.

Him I call a Brahmin who is bright like the moon, pure, clear, and serene, and craves not for sentient existence.

Him I call a Brahmin who has passed over the miry, thorny road of the world and reached the other shore, who is meditative, steadfast, free from doubts and attachments, content.

Him I call a Brahmin who in this world has overcome all lust, abandoned the longing for existence, and has become a homeless one.\*

Him I call a Brahmin who has ceased craving and travels homeless, who has transcended the craving for existence.

Him I call a Brahmin who has cast off all earthly and heavenly ties, who is free from every tie.

Him I call a Brahmin who has risen above both pleasure and pain, who has attained equilibrium and is victorious in all worlds.

Him I call a Brahmin who knows the course of birth and death, who is unattached, happy, and enlightened.

Him I call a Brahmin whose future is not traced by devas or men, a venerable one who has transcended passion.

Him I call a Brahmin who has resigned all things, whether in the future, past, or present, and grasps nothing.

Him I call a Brahmin who is a hero, a sage, a conqueror; passionless and enlightened.

Him I call a Brahmin who knows his former abodes, who sees heaven and hell, who has reached the end of birth and death, and has attained enlightenment and perfection.

\* Mystically unattached to any particular place, and at home in all places and worlds.

## LIFE OF SYNEGIUS\*

On his return to Ptolemais as bishop he found that a reign of terror prevailed. The governor Andronicus had instituted the public torturing of people on the smallest pretexts, and had invented many new instruments for this purpose. In one case a man was tortured for the non-payment of taxes while at the same time he was prevented from selling his land to raise money for paying the debt. The people thronged to Synesius, begging him to redress their wrongs. Wherever he went he was faced with their sufferings. Reasoning, reproof, and denunciation were without effect upon the governor. Synesius put the matter before higher authorities without result. It seemed as though his prayers were unheeded. Finally, after an outburst of even greater excesses than before, Andronicus was solemnly and formally excommunicated by Synesius in the presence of the people. Before the sentence was confirmed Andronicus professed repentance and was re-admitted to the communion of the Church, but he soon returned to his former practices, and was finally excommunicated. Soon afterwards he was dismissed and before long had in his turn fallen into misery and was being unjustly treated. Synesius now came to his help. Writing to Theophilus, he said, "It is the custom of the Church to lift up the humble and to humble those who are lifted up. So Andronicus, hated by her for his evil deeds, now is pitied for the calamities he suffers, and in his behalf we have even offended those now in power."

Among the duties of a bishop was that of the visitation of his diocese in order to satisfy himself that the affairs of the Church were being well conducted, to give counsel, to settle disputes, and to acquaint the archbishop with the state of affairs. In a long letter to Theophilus Synesius reported upon an unusually long and exacting tour which he had been commissioned to make throughout the province. The incidents described reflect the disturbances and difficulties of the times. In one district there was violent contention between the people and their bishop. In another rival bishops were disputing for the possession of a piece of land which included a hill, most advan-

\* For previous section see *Shrine of Wisdom*, No. 108.

tageously placed for a fortress. There were wandering bishops who had left their dioceses of their own accord and travelled about the country enjoying the honours of their position, but doing no work. In all the cases reported, Synesius, by his justice and benevolence, found a remedy.

In these years Synesius was suffering the strain both of public and private disasters. His dearly loved son had died in the troubled days before the dismissal of Andronicus. A second child died soon after the end of another and even more terrible invasion of Pentapolis, of which Synesius wrote in a letter, during the siege of Ptolemais, that the enemy had carried off the women and children, killed the men, stolen the flocks and herds, and devastated the cities, robbing and burning the churches. "Pentapolis is ruined, is extinguished, has perished. I have no longer a country to flee from. I am overwhelmed at the thought of having to abandon the house and services of God. . . . How long am I to be stationed on the battlements, to mount guard upon the wall? I, who used to spend whole nights in observing the movements of the stars, am worn out by looking night after night for the movements of the enemy." But at the moment of their greatest need, a new general brought well-armed forces to their aid, and the city was saved for a time.

Broken down in health by the strain to which he had for so long been subjected, Synesius did not much longer survive his child. In his last letter to Hypatia he wrote: "You have been to me a mother, a sister, a teacher, and in all these relationships have done me good. Every title and sign of honour is your due."

The extant works of Synesius include the Oration before Arcadius, *De Regno*; an essay on Dio Chrysostom of Prusa, who from being a sophist and rhetorician became a serious philosopher, *Dio sive de suo ipsius instituto*; a treatise on Providence, *De Providentia*, in the form of an allegory called an "Egyptian tale", introducing the names Osiris and Typhon; a treatise on dreams, *De insomnis*; hymns, letters, and various sermons and speeches. Among his lighter works is a witty treatise *A Eulogy of Baldness*. This humorous skit was written as a rejoinder to Dion's trifling rhetorical *Eulogy of long hair*, and was composed in a similar rhetorical style. It was evidently written with enjoyment, though, as Synesius said, it could not be regarded as

the legitimate offspring of a philosopher, "They tell me," he wrote, "that the mother apes gaze with rapture on their own offspring and are astonished at their beauty, though they see clearly enough that the other young ones are but the children of apes. So then I must leave others to judge of my children."

Synesius had not been free from attacks upon his views. In 404, about the time of his marriage, he wrote a defence of his conduct in blending the Neo-Platonic and Christian ideals. He had been accused of "sinning against philosophy" by "people in white and people in black clothing." He pointed out that the aim both of Greek philosophers and of Christian mystics was the contemplation of God and union with Him. The means used were similar in both cases—with withdrawal from the ordinary worldly life, control of bodily activities, and the practice of virtue. But the hermit regarded pleasure as destructive to the soul, while Synesius received it as a gift from God to reconcile it to earthly life. "I should be glad indeed," he said,\* "if our natures allowed us always to be occupied with the contemplation of God, but as this is impossible, I wish to enjoy some mirth and as it were anoint my life with cheerfulness. For I know I am a man; not a God, that I should be free from all inclination to pleasure, nor a brute that I should find my delight in bodily pleasure.

"God has given pleasure to the soul to be as it were a fastening by which it may preserve its connection with body."

When blamed for his love of learning, Synesius maintained that the highest object of man was not to lead a virtuous life only, but also a life of intellectual activity, for only through intellect could God Who is Pure Intellect be apprehended. Thus in one of his hymns he wrote, "Kindle for me, O Lord, the Lights which lead the soul on high."

In the treatise on dreams he speaks of the soul as descending from heaven in obedience to the laws of Providence to perform its appointed service in the world. It receives the imagination as a vehicle by which to travel upon its earthward journey, for through the imagination the soul can represent to itself both the sensations of the body and the conceptions of the mind, and thus it links mind and body. The duty of the soul is to purify and elevate the imagination.

\* In the essay on Dio Chrysostom.

The life to be lived by one who wishes to receive helpful dreams must be one of temperance and frugality. He must avoid all disturbing passions and must pursue philosophy.

The treatise on Providence was called an *Egyptian Tale*. In the introduction, Synesius writes, "This fable is Egyptian.\* The Egyptians transcend in wisdom. Perhaps this also being a fable, obscurely signifies something more than a fable because it is Egyptian. If, however, it is not a fable, but a sacred discourse, it will deserve in a still greater degree to be told and committed to writing."

The treatise is in two parts, the first of which is based on the events, culminating in an insurrection, which took place during his stay at Constantinople. It was published as soon as it was written. Aurelian, who was banished from Constantinople early in the year 400 can be recognized in the character of Osiris. The second part was written later in that year at the request of friends, and is less closely linked with historical events.

The first part of the story tells of the brothers Osiris and Typhon. Osiris was of a gentle and noble character, while Typhon was of entirely opposite nature. On the retirement of their father from the throne, Osiris was elected king by the people. Typhon, furiously resentful, at last accomplished the exile of his brother. The second part deals with the restoration of Osiris. The story makes it evident that in the opinion of the writer gentleness and magnanimity without strength are not sufficient for the protection of a kingdom.

†"Osiris was elected to the kingly office, and as soon as he had been initiated as king by the Gods and his father they announced to him from definite knowledge, numerous benefits, but that his brother Typhon must be banished if Egypt were to prosper, for Typhon's nature could endure nothing good, and he had allies in a powerful company of evil demons to whom he was akin. . . . Frequently the priests advised him to send Typhon into exile, for they knew the gentle nature of Osiris, and finally they told him that he might retain his leadership for a time, but that inadvertently he would lose it and betray his fellow-countrymen, bringing great desolation in the name of brotherly love."

\* Thomas Taylor's translation.

† Fitzgerald's translation.

Osiris replied that it was easy for the Gods and the priests to remedy any failures on his own part, and that he was not afraid to let his brother remain in Egypt. His father then warned him not to expect the Gods to do for him such things as They had given him the power to do for himself.

\*“Conceive, my dear Osiris,” said his father, “that it is well for a Divine Nature to exist and at the same time not to exist in this terrestrial abode.†

“Do not request the Gods to be your associates, since Their primary employment consists in contemplation and the government of the first parts of the world. Yet you must not think that They are without employment, or that Their descent hither is perpetual, for They descend according to orderly periods of time‡ for the purpose of imparting the principle of a beneficent motion in the republics of mankind. But this happens when They harmonize a kingdom and send hither for this purpose souls allied to Themselves.

“By no means, therefore, should men be indignant, since the evils which happen to them are self-inflicted, nor ought they to accuse the Gods of not providentially attending to their affairs, . . . For Providence resembles that mother who, having caused her child to grow and furnished him with arms, orders him to use them to repel the evils by which he may be attacked.

“Wherever the divine part of the soul does not accompany the inferior element, but is ever and anon beating it back and turning towards itself, it is in the course of nature for that element also to become at last hardened so as to resist attacks, and once so armoured, no longer to admit the influxes from the demons.

“The living being, then, in this way really becomes divine and a single whole, and this is a heavenly plant growing upon the earth, one that has not received any foreign graft, that it may

\* Thomas Taylor’s translation.

† A Divine Nature is not present locally in the earth, but is present by Its energies and illuminations. (Thomas Taylor’s note).

‡ By the descent of the Gods to the earth, nothing more is meant than the aptitude of terrestrial natures to receive Their illuminations. For the Gods always contemplate and always energize providentially, but earthly natures are not always adapted to receive Their beneficent energies in a becoming manner. (Thomas Taylor’s note).

put forth fruit from such, but one that even changes a foreign element to its own nature."

In spite of these warnings, Osiris gave himself unsparingly to the work of ruling and elevating his people by gentleness and persuasion alone. He made virtue the aim of all education and every institution, giving honours to men capable of governing and at the same time instructing the people. Though himself indifferent to wealth, he made provision for the well-being of all his people. Under his rule all evil-doers received kindly words and the most gentle treatment instead of the expected retribution, and in this one thing, said Synesius, "He was wanting in judgment, for malignity not assuaged by virtue, is rather inflamed by it." This extreme mildness provided Typhon with his opportunity. Calling in the army of their former enemies, the Scythians, and collecting the ill-disposed under his own leadership, he stirred up an insurrection. Osiris gave himself up to save his country from devastation and was exiled by Typhon who usurped the throne and undid all the good Osiris had done.

The second part of the Egyptian tale brought in a "stranger" living in Thebes who had been already mentioned in the first part of the story. This man, who revered Osiris, remained in Thebes after Typhon's victory and worked by his writings and speeches to bring about the restoration of Osiris. He even exhorted Typhon to emulate the virtues of his brother. But Typhon, going from one excess to another, at last laid hands on the religion of the country, introducing from the Scythian practices a counterfeit ritual and building a temple for the new form of worship. Then the stranger called to mind a God-given revelation: "Whenever those who are now in power shall attempt to introduce innovations in religion, then expect that in a short time the foreigners shall be cast out, themselves pursued by furies."

From this time "the action of the Gods began to be manifest." Terror and panic seized the Scythian troops who were still maintained by Typhon, and one night many of them secretly left Thebes. The priests meanwhile had secretly convened meetings of the people who, after further severe extortions on the part of Typhon, seized an opportunity and regained their city, casting the usurper into prison. Osiris was brought back in

triumph "amid the company of the Gods", and his second reign was far greater and more glorious than the first.

Synesius wrote many hymns, and in those composed after his baptism he blended the Neo-Platonic and Christian ideas. The first of these hymns invokes Christ as the Son of the Holy Virgin, and prays for the descent of the Holy Spirit "to refresh the wings of the soul and to perfect the Divine gifts." In another hymn to Christ he says : "Thou camest down to earth and didst sojourn among men and drive the deceiver, the serpent fiend, from Thy Father's Garden. Thou wentest down to Tartarus where death held the countless races of mankind. The old man Hades feared Thee, the devouring dog fled from the portal; but having released the righteous from suffering, Thou didst offer with a holy worship hymns of praise to the Father. As Thou wentest up on high . . . Æther, wise Parent of harmony, sang with joy to his seven-toned lyre a hymn of triumph. The morning star, day's harbinger, and the golden star of evening, the planet Venus, smiled on Thee. Before Thee went the horned moon decked with fresh light, leading the Gods of night. Beneath Thy feet Titan spread his flowing locks of light. He recognized the Son of God, the Creative Intelligence, the Source of his own flames. But Thou didst fly on outstretched wings beyond the vaulted sky, alighting on the spheres of pure intelligence where is the Fountain of Goodness, the heaven enveloped in silence.

"There time, deep-flowing and unwearied time, is not; but Eternity, ever-young, ever-old, rules the abiding habitation of the Gods."\*

The last hymn of Synesius, written shortly before his death, is a prayer to Christ:

"O Christ, Son of God, Who reignest above, remember Thy servant, by destiny a sinner, who writeth these words, and grant me release from passions that bring death, which are implanted in me, in a sullied soul. Grant me, O Saviour Jesus, to behold Thy Divine Light, that appearing there I may sing a song to the Healer of souls, the Healer of bodies, together with the mighty Father and the Holy Spirit."†

\* Halcombe's translation.

† Fitzgerald's translation.

## EXTRACTS FROM THE LAWS OF MANU

A true knowledge of the One Supreme God; that is the most exalted of all sciences, because it ensures immortality.

For in the knowledge of and adoration of the One God, which the Veda teaches, all the rules of good conduct are comprised.

Let every Brahmin with fixed attention consider all nature, both visible and invisible, as existing in the Divine Spirit; for, when he contemplates the boundless universe existing in the Divine Spirit, he cannot give his heart to iniquity.

The Divine Spirit alone is the whole assembly of the Gods; all worlds are seated in the Divine Spirit; and the Divine Spirit produces, by a chain of causes and effects consistent with free-will, the connected series of acts performed by embodied souls.

The man who perceives in his own soul the Supreme Self present in all beings, acquires equanimity towards them all, and shall ultimately be united to the highest essence, even that of the Supreme Himself.

## JEWELS FROM RUMI

Pass over names and look to qualities,  
So that qualities may lead thee to essence!  
The difference of sects arise from His names;  
When they pierce His essence they find His peace.

When the light of Allah illuminates his senses,  
A man no longer is a slave to effects.  
When love of God kindles a flame in his heart  
He burns, and is freed from effects.  
He has no need of signs to assure him of love,  
For love casts its own light up to heaven.